

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Annual Report 2024/25

Foreword from the Chair

As Chair of the North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel I am pleased to introduce the Panel's Annual Report for 2024/25.

The last year has seen the Panel start to build an effective and constructive relationship with our new Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime under the new Mayoral arrangements. As part of moving into this new framework there have been some key areas requiring the Panel's input or comment. These have included the Mayor's new plans for policing and fire and rescue, against which the Panel will continue to scrutinise the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's performance in relation to securing efficiency and effective services for residents of York and North Yorkshire.

While these changes to the legal framework and accountabilities surrounding the Panel have therefore seen a shift from the previous Commissioner model, the work of the Panel has continued largely unaffected in providing a 'check and balance' on the performance of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in relation policing, fire and crime matters.

For example, we have been keen to continue our support for seeking more resilient funding arrangements for our fire and rescue service and have been pleased to see the good work continue under our Deputy Mayor around tackling violence against women and girls. This has also included the completion and opening of the long-awaited Sexual Assault Referral Centre in York, which provides a vital facility for some of our most vulnerable residents.

We have also sought assurance on issues of concern to us and our residents, such as the outcomes of recent inspection reports for policing and around the review of shared services collaboration. Undoubtedly such issues will continue to form part of our work programme for the year ahead and we look forward to building on our dialogue with the Deputy Mayor.

May I take opportunity to extend my thanks to the officers of the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) – particularly those from the Policing, Fire and Crime Team - for their support of the work of the Panel over the last year, to those officers from the police and fire services who have attended our meetings and of course to those officers from Legal and Democratic Services at North Yorkshire Council who have continued to support and guide the Panel.

Cllr Peter R Wilkinson

Chair

April 2025

1. What is the Police, Fire and Crime Panel?

Police and Crime Panels were established in England and Wales in 2012 to provide a check and balance function in relation to the performance of Police and Crime Commissioners, who also came into being at that time. Panels have a wide remit to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other actions taken, by the Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner's functions. Panels have oversight of some of the Commissioner's key documents, decisions and reports, requiring them to provide information and answer any questions which the Panel considers necessary.

Police and Crime Panels are joint scrutiny bodies of the local authorities in the police service area. They are mainly comprised of elected members from these authorities, with normally at least two independent members who are co-opted to bring additional or complementary skills and knowledge. Councillor membership of a Panel must be geographically and politically proportionate. The Panel's membership in this reporting period is outlined in section 9, below.

With the transfer of fire and rescue governance to the Commissioner in 2018, the North Yorkshire Panel duly became the Police, Fire and Crime Panel ("the Panel"), to reflect a broadening out of its scrutiny functions.

The Panel does not scrutinise the Chief Constable or Chief Fire Officer or hold them to account. They are not required to attend Panel meetings but can be asked to attend with the Commissioner where it is felt that providing further operational context or clarification to a discussion would be helpful.

With the advent of devolution in York and North Yorkshire in 2024, the policing, fire and crime responsibilities of the area's Commissioner transferred to the Mayor, David Skaith, on 7th May 2024. The Mayor is legally able to delegate policing and crime functions to a Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and, in this area, this delegation extended to the fire and rescue authority functions which passed to the Mayor. A Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime – Jo Coles - commenced in post on 8th July 2024.

Similarly to the role of Commissioner, the Mayor has responsibility for setting the direction, objectives and budgets of North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and for holding the Chief Constable/Chief Fire Officer to account. The Panel's role is to scrutinise and support the performance of the Mayor (and Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime) and specifically to conduct the following statutory functions:

- To review the Mayor's draft Police and Crime / Fire and Rescue Plans and make recommendations on these;
- To review and make recommendations on proposed appointments for the roles of Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer – the Panel also has the power to veto these proposed appointments.
- To review and make recommendations on the Mayor's proposed level of Council Tax precept for policing and fire – the Panel has a power of veto for the Mayor's first precept proposal.
- To review and make recommendations on the Mayor's draft Annual Reports for Policing and Fire and Rescue;
- To consider non-criminal complaints made against the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime.

The Mayor may delegate some of the policing and crime functions to a Deputy Mayor with the exception of:

- Issuing a Police and Crime Plan / Fire and Rescue Plan;
- Calculating the Council Tax precept requirement for policing and fire and rescue; and
- Appointing, suspending or requiring a Chief Constable or Chief Fire Officer to retire or resign.

Further details about the Panel's governance and recent publications can be found at <https://nypartnerships.org.uk/pfcp> Meeting papers and agendas can be found on the [North Yorkshire Council website](#).

Panel meetings take place roughly five to six times per year and are held in public. Support to the Panel is provided by the host authority, which is North Yorkshire Council.

2. Meetings held during 2024/25

Formal Panel meetings are held in person and generally rotate venue between Northallerton, York and Selby. The Panel convened in person and in public on five occasions to undertake Panel business in the last municipal year. Panel meetings are live broadcasted and recorded where possible and recordings can be viewed at <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees-and-meetings/live-meetings>.

One Panel meeting scheduled for June 2024 was cancelled due to observance of the pre-election period restrictions placed on councillors prior to the General Election in early July.

The Panel remains keen to hear from and engage with the public in its role. In addition to its governance web site as referenced in section 1, meeting agendas and papers are published at least five clear working days prior to each meeting and the North Yorkshire Council Communications Team also support in disseminating social media messaging to promote upcoming meetings.

While there were only two members of the public and/or councillors who submitted questions or statements to the Panel in this reporting period, it is notable that as at end of March 2025, the average viewing figures for recorded Panel meetings in the 2024/25 municipal year were 192 views per meeting; a slight increase from the 2023/24 figures. This indicates that the public continue to make use of the ability to view Panel proceedings at a time and manner of their choosing.

Panel members have also continued to meet remotely for more informal briefings and development sessions during the period and these are outlined through this report.

3. Key Areas of Focus for the Panel in 2024/25

The Panel has reviewed a number of items over the course of the 2024/25 municipal year and the following provides an overview of some of these.

a) Scrutiny of the planned improvements and progress monitoring by the Deputy Mayor in relation to the HMICFRS inspection outcomes on integrity arrangements for North Yorkshire Police

The Panel sought opportunity in February to consider the outcomes of an inspection report on integrity arrangements at North Yorkshire Police, as published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in January 2025.

The Panel were pleased to note the inspection finding that vetting of police staff and officers is good but expressed concern that the two other areas of the inspection were rated as 'requiring improvement'; namely tackling potential corruption and upholding the standards of professional behaviour. Members discussed the assurance framework in place around monitoring progress against the improvement targets for North Yorkshire Police (NYP) and were advised that additional

investigative capacity has been put into the Professional Standards Department (PSD) at NYP. Panel members noted the inspectorate's concerns around some cases being dealt with in basic command units rather than PSD and conveyed a concern that if work stops on a case where an officer resigns then that person may be able to re-join public service or a similar workforce setting. The concern conveyed was around public perception of NYP seeming to 'mark its own homework'.

The Panel are conscious that there are relatively few areas of the country which have followed the complaints handling model adopted in North Yorkshire several years ago, following legislative changes, which enabled a triage and response model to be developed 'in house' within the current Policing, Fire and Crime Team for a significant proportion of police complaints. The Deputy Mayor highlighted the importance of any system needing to work effectively but that similarly, change will not be made for change's sake and she is keen to review how to ensure the best service outcomes.

In view of the inspection report outcomes, the Panel has requested a further update report in 2025 and has also requested a report for July on complaints handling within both the PSD and the Policing, Fire and Crime Team at the MCA.

b) Review of the Mayor's Council Tax precept proposals for policing and fire 2025/26

Policing Precept

The Mayor put forward a proposal to the Panel on 6 February 2025 to set the policing precept at £320.86, representing an increase of £14 (or 4.56%) over the 2024/25 level for a Band D property.

While the police funding settlement has provided the Mayor with an increase in core government funding of 6.2% for 2025/26, the Panel acknowledged that much of this funding is linked to decisions already taken nationally or expenditure; including funding to cover last year's pay award, funding to help cover higher National Insurance contributions and funding to support the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.

The Panel therefore recognised that the Mayor sought to increase the precept for 2025/26 to ensure that the service can accommodate all inflationary pressures and the 2025/26 pay award. The Panel asked a number of questions in the meeting by way of further clarification and assurance around issues including the assumptions made in the report around inflationary increases and the weighting given to consultation responses.

The Panel heard that the policing budget is in a relatively strong position, with a proportionately low level of borrowing. It was also noted that North Yorkshire will receive £973,000 of funding for neighbourhood policing, following finalisation of the government settlement. The Panel welcome the Chief Constable's commitment to improving neighbourhood policing and requested that a further report be brought on the service's Neighbourhood Policing Strategy in due course.

The Panel considered that the 4.56% proposed increase in precept would help achieve a balanced budget over the next four years, ensuring that the police service remains in a stable financial position. On this basis, the Panel gave its support to the Mayor's proposal to increase the policing precept for 2025/26 to £320.86.

Fire and Rescue Draft Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Plan Proposal

Under the new MCA framework, the Mayor determines how much of his general budget requirement will be allocated towards fire and rescue services. While the MCA therefore makes the final decision on the Council Tax levy for fire and rescue for the coming year, the Panel continues to have an

important role in reviewing this aspect and giving its formal recommendation to the Mayor on the proposed levy.

The Panel considered the Mayor's proposal to set the fire and rescue element of the Council Tax precept at £107.02 for 2025/26, which represented a 28.9% increase (or £24) over the 2024/25 level for a Band D property.

While mindful of the ask on residents with a steep increase to the precept, the Panel has been fully apprised of the significant financial challenges that the fire and rescue service (FRS) has been facing over recent years following historic under-funding and the freezing of the precept in the last few years. The Panel has been supportive of previous Commissioners' efforts to obtain a fairer funding deal for the FRS to ensure that the service can be placed on a more stable financial footing and be able to invest in critical equipment and appliances. In this context, the Panel has separately written to the government recently to urge that consideration is given to putting funding for flooding response on a statutory basis and to re-consider its recent removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant and Services Grant/Minimum Funding Guarantee.

The Panel therefore recognised that the Mayor is keen to take advantage of having greater flexibility under his general budget requirement to ensure that opportunity is taken in 2025/26 to address some of these critical and urgent issues by seeking a higher precept from the public. It was recognised that this proposal is being made in the interests of securing both public safety and the safety of firefighters. It was noted that 67% of respondents to the public consultation had also supported an increase of at least £15, with 35% seeking an increase of £24.

Having taken into account the above factors and the opportunity presented by the flexibility afforded to the Mayor this year, the Panel supported the Mayor's proposed increase to the fire element of the Council Tax precept. It was recommended that the Mayor ensures that the public are kept updated on how this investment into the service is being made.

c) Scrutiny of the performance of the Force Control Room in relation to handling of 101 and 999 calls

The Panel has continued to request an annual update on performance levels in the police Force Control Room (FCR) in relation to the 999 and 101 non-emergency numbers. This has followed the significant investment made into the FCR in the last few years from previous Commissioners and the inspectorate's conclusion in 2023 that NYP needed to continue to improve the speed at which it answers 999 calls.

At its meeting on 6th February, the Panel commended the progress made in handling of 999 calls over the last year. The NYP Service Level Agreement is for 90% of 999 calls to be answered within 10 seconds and in the previous twelve months the volume of those answered in this timeframe increased from 90.34% to 94.81%. The Service Level Agreement for 101 calls is for 80% to be answered in 180 seconds and in the previous twelve months 64.31% reached this target, up from 57.77%. The Panel has been concerned at abandonment rates, particularly for the 101 service as this can have a knock-on for the 999 service. However, this volume dropped to just 5% in December 2024. Nevertheless, the Panel has asked for more precise figures on the number of calls abandoned and has sought to understand how NYP knows who has abandoned a call and what happens to such calls. The Chief Constable spoke to the investment required in digitisation of processes and 'channel shift' towards online services which can assist in tracking abandonment more clearly. NYP are keen to ensure that victims of crime are kept updated in a timely way to help mitigate the impact on calls received.

The Panel has also taken an interest in the last couple of years around NYP's implementation of the 'Right Care, Right Person' framework, which aims to preserve police officer time on cases appropriate to police handling but ensuring that communities are also supported. The Deputy Mayor has met recently with the Integrated Care Board to ensure work on this is joined up and now sits on a governance board which seeks to provide oversight of handling of cases.

d) Review of progress against the strategy to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and the development of a Victims' Centre in York

The Panel takes an annual progress report in relation to the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy published in 2022, which sets out a collective commitment by a range of partner organisations to tackle VAWG.

The Panel was pleased to note that the Deputy Mayor intends to retain tackling VAWG as a core priority in the Mayor's new Police and Crime Plan, with a victim-centred focus to be at the heart of planning and commissioning. The Panel commended the comprehensive report provided and scrutinised on a number of areas including the following:

- The apparent lack of successful outcomes for some voluntary behavioural programmes such as for perpetrators of stalking. Members heard that the Deputy Mayor's ambition is to have mandated services available.
- The need to secure funding for third sector partners involved in delivery of the VAWG strategy whose funding falls away after 31st March 2025. The Panel heard that the Deputy Mayor is acutely aware of the challenges for these partners and is voicing this along with colleagues nationally.
- Members discussed the evaluations of pilots for victim services and considered with the Deputy Mayor how best to share this information with council officers, including through the Mayoral Combined Authority.

Due to the importance of the issues, the Panel will continue to seek an annual progress report. It was noted that the Deputy Mayor will shortly be refreshing the VAWG strategy.

e) Panel's recommendations on the Mayor's draft Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan 2025/29

The Mayor is legally required to issue a Police and Crime Plan by the end of the financial year in which the Mayoral election took place; in this case by 31 March 2025. There is no statutory requirement on the Mayor to produce a Fire and Rescue Plan, however it was determined that one would be produced at the same time, setting out the Mayor's priorities. The Mayor must legally provide a draft of the Plan(s) for the Panel to review and make recommendations on, which the Panel did in January 2025. The Panel were supportive of the aim to make the plans more accessible to a wider readership in terms of length, style and format. However, it was felt that the plans would benefit from more baseline metrics, where these are helpful, in order that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor can be confident in monitoring progress made by the services and so that the Panel are also able to effectively scrutinise the Mayor's performance. Members fed back specific comments on elements of the draft content, largely to ensure that the Mayor's ambitions were more explicitly stated in certain areas. The Police and Crime Plan was published on 31st March and the Fire and Rescue Plan on 7th April – both are available at <https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/>. The Panel will now review its work programme to ensure that it is focussing on scrutiny of the key priorities set out in the Mayor's plans.

f) Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity in policing and fire and rescue

The Panel has requested reports over the last few years on the progress within both services to promote and embed equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI), particularly following the excoriating national reports about the treatment of certain demographics within both services. An update was taken in January 2025 and the Panel were keen to understand how the Deputy Mayor ensures ongoing monitoring of staff demographics and links to staff retention. The Deputy Mayor was keen to highlight the extensive work undertaken at NYP around issues such as unconscious bias and the recent work taken by the FRS in conjunction with University of Huddersfield on the Framework for Change staff programme.

The Deputy Mayor is particularly keen that work spaces within the FRS are made as accessible as possible to a range of applicants for On-Call firefighters, where there are challenges nationally in recruitment. The Panel conveyed the importance of the Deputy Mayor continuing to engage with representative bodies for staff and to be agile in her approach to ensuring that the experiences of women and BAME staff in the FRS continue to be enhanced.

g) Risk and Resource Model post-implementation review

The Panel has been keen to seek information on the impact of the implementation of the Risk and Resource Model (RRM) for FRS and as such considered outcomes with the Deputy Mayor and Chief Fire Officer in October 2024. The Panel welcomed the notable improvement in response times by the service but were conscious that the changing environmental demands on the service will continue to impact its ability to re-invest; particularly as flooding response is not nationally funded. The Panel has as such written to government earlier this year to request that flooding response is placed on a statutory funding basis. Members conveyed concerns around the level of On-Call availability at Huntington station, especially over the busy summer months. The Deputy Mayor sought to reassure Panel around recent recruitment and vehicle availability, although it was acknowledged that there are challenges nationally in recruiting and retaining On-Call firefighters. The RRM will undergo a review in 2026 *[Diane to check timelines and details with Tamara]*

h) EnableNY Progress Report

The progress of the shared services collaboration programme, previously known as EnableNY, has continued to be of interest to Panel members, particularly as these efforts formed part of the cornerstone of the business case for governance of fire and rescue to come under the Commissioner model previously. The Panel took a report in July 2024 which outlined the challenges which have impacted the progress of the programme and the anticipated efficiencies, following an independent review. With a new Chief Constable in post and a new Mayor/Deputy Mayor, there is opportunity for the services to redefine objectives and to ensure effective outcomes are secured for both. A review of the programme has taken place and the Panel will take a further report in due course.

e) Tackling hate crime

The Panel took a short update on efforts to tackle hate crime within York and North Yorkshire in October 2024, having received a detailed briefing from officers at NYP the previous year. The Panel noted the significant increase in reporting for some crimes in the last year in comparison with the previous year's figures and discussed possible contexts for this, such as the disturbances experienced in parts of the country in the summer of 2024. It was discussed that some issues are recorded as hate crimes and others as hate incidents but that reporting in either case is important.

4. Responses to consultations

The Panel has formally responded and/or contributed to the following local/national consultations during the 2024/25 financial year:

- Consultation on enabling remote attendance at meetings and proxy voting (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, December 2024).

The Panel has also written to both the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention and the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution in this period, expressing concern at the removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant and Services Grant/Minimum Funding Guarantee in relation to fire and rescue service funding.

5. Forward Plan – Key Issues for 2025/26

The Panel has a number of issues on the forward work programme for the 2025/26 municipal year, including statutory and non-statutory business such as:

- Scrutinise the performance of the shared services collaboration programme for policing and the FRS;
- Consider further the post-implementation and impact of the Risk and Resource Model (FRS) and its review in 2026;
- Review and make recommendations on the Mayor’s draft Annual Reports for Policing and Fire and Rescue 2025/26;
- Review and make recommendations on the Mayor’s proposed Council Tax precept levels for 2026/27 for both policing and fire and rescue;
- Review the refreshed strategy to tackle violence against women and girls and progress made;
- Scrutinise how rural crime is being tackled, including wildlife crime;
- Scrutinise progress against recent HMCFRS inspection outcomes for both services;
- Scrutinise the efficacy of complaints handling within both the Policing, Fire and Crime Team (MCA) and at NYP.
- Consider a proposal for the appointment of the Panel’s co-opted independent members.

6. Development of the Panel

The Panel has continued to seek opportunities for informal briefings, training opportunities and development workshops to help continue members’ awareness of regional and national issues and to enhance their scrutiny role. Panel Members and supporting officers have been involved in the following during 2024/25:

- **Visit to the Victims’ Centre at Acer House in York.** Members attended a visit to view the facilities available at the new Sexual Assault Referral Centre prior to the centre’s opening in March 2025.
- **Force Control Room.** A number of the Panel attended a visit to North Yorkshire Police’s Force Control Room at Fulford Road Station in York in June and July 2024, where they were able to get a better understanding of the operation for handling 101 and 999 calls, including the mental health triage undertaken. This particularly supported newer Panel members in developing their overview of this area, which continues to be scrutinised annually at meetings.
- **Finance Sub-Group.** The Panel has continued to make use of informal opportunities to meet remotely with the MCA’s Assistant Director of Resources, particularly prior to the precept-setting, to gain further insight into the budget position. This group is open to all Panel

Members and helps to develop lines of enquiry for Panel meetings. A 'pre-precept' briefing was provided for the sub-group in February 2024.

- **LGA Annual Fire Conference 2025.** The Panel had representation to the annual conference for fire and rescue, held in Gateshead in March 2025, where the programme included speakers from fire and rescue services, councils and Mayoral authorities, to name a few, considering topics such as driving culture change and improvement.
- **VAWG Summit.** A couple of Panel members attended a summit on tackling VAWG, hosted by the Deputy Mayor, in November 2024. The event explored how local agencies, organisations and communities can better work together to tackle the root causes and impact of VAWG, improve outcomes for victims and survivors and rebuild trust in policing and the criminal justice process. This was an insightful event on an area of continued focus for the Panel.
- **Operational Briefing for Panel Members at Police HQ.** An informal briefing has been facilitated by the Chief Constable for the Panel in May 2025, to support the Panel in getting further context into a range of current topics of interest including neighbourhood policing and rural crime.

7. Complaints handling by the Panel

The Panel has a statutory role to consider non-criminal complaints made regarding the conduct of the Commissioner.

During the municipal year 2024/25:

- One complaint was received by the Panel, which had regard to North Yorkshire Police and the conduct of individual officers. As such this was not recorded or considered by the Panel but was re-directed as appropriate.

Further information about the Panel's complaints handling process and complaints publications can be found at <https://nypartnerships.org.uk/pfcpcomplaints>

8. Panel budget for 2024/25

As host authority, North Yorkshire Council receives an annual grant from the Home Office to support the administration of the Panel. For the 2024/25 financial year the Home Office grant was **£65,260**. The Panel is required to report biannually to the Home Office as to how the grant has been spent, including provision of a performance report against Key Performance Indicators.

North Yorkshire Council is in the process of submitting a year-end return in May 2025 to claim the full amount of £65,260 for the 2024/25 financial year.

The Panel also received £10,637 from City of York Council for the 2024/25 financial year, to contribute towards both administration costs and Member allowances.

For the 2024/25 financial year, North Yorkshire Council absorbed an estimated £18,710 in costs for the running of the Panel, in addition to the grant and income received. This is an increase of around £1,795 on the overspend accrued for 2023/24. This increase is principally related to increases to Special Responsibility Allowances in 2024/25. It should be noted that the Panel also lost around £3,000 in annual income as a result of local government reorganisation.

North Yorkshire Council anticipates that it will be offered a grant of £65,260 for the 2025/26 financial year by the Home Office. However, the award will not be confirmed until August 2025. The council will need to review with the Panel Chair how any further overspends are best managed.

Following a review of Special Responsibility Allowances undertaken by North Yorkshire Council's Independent Remuneration Panel in 2024, North Yorkshire Council agreed changes to some of the Panel Member allowances from 2025/26 which will also assist in reducing the current levels of overspend by the council going forward.

The following table highlights actual spend for 2024/25.

<u>Expenditure Breakdown 2024/25 financial year (£)</u>	<u>94,607</u>
made up of:	
Support to the Panel (inc on-costs) Secretariat, Legal, Finance, Business Support & Communications staff	58,987
Printing / Postage / Admin / Meeting costs	1,163
Subscriptions, training and conferences	395
Panel Member expenses (inc Member allowances, expenses)	<u>34,062</u>
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	<u>94,607</u>
Home Office total grant 2024-25	<u>65,260</u>
Income received from City of York 2023-24	<u>10,637</u>
<u>Total Income Received</u>	<u>75,897</u>
Total overspend incurred by NYC	<u>18,710</u>

9. Membership

Membership of the Panel during the 2024/25 municipal year was as follows:

North Yorkshire Council	Cllr Chris Aldred Cllr Lindsay Burr MBE Cllr Tim Grogan Cllr Carl Les OBE (stood down 7 May 2024) Cllr Rich Maw (stood down 15 May 2024) Cllr Heather Moorhouse Cllr Steve Shaw-Wright (appointed 15 May 2024) Cllr Malcolm Taylor (appointed 15 May 2024) Cllr Peter Wilkinson
City of York Council	Cllr Emilie Knight Cllr Danny Myers Cllr Michael Pavlovic
Co-opted independent member	Fraser Forsyth
Co-opted independent member	Mags Godderidge
Co-opted independent member	Martin Walker